

(a) an incoming call mode selector for selecting a desired incoming call mode from one of an intercom mode and a telephone mode, and wherein

(i) if telephone mode is selected or the first participant is engaged in an active teleconference call, the first participant is notified of and provided with the option of accepting the incoming teleconference call, and

(ii) if intercom mode is selected, the incoming call can be accepted automatically.

4. The teleconferencing system of claim 3 wherein the incoming call acceptor can perform any function selected from the set of functions consisting of:

- (a) blocking all incoming teleconference calls;
- (b) notifying the first participant that the second participant refuses to accept the call; and
- (c) notifying the first participant that an attempt has been made to establish the call but that the call has not yet been established.

5. The teleconferencing system of claim 2 wherein the call acceptance mechanism includes a priority call announcer for indicating to a user of a workstation that a priority teleconference call is being directed to the workstation.

6. The teleconferencing system of claim 2 further comprising:

- (a) a teleconference call acceptance detection mechanism for detecting whether a first participant accepted a teleconference call initiated by a second participant; and
- (b) a leave word indicator for generating a message for visual display at the workstation of the first participant indicating that the second participant attempted to call the first participant, if the first participant did not accept the teleconference call.

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7. The teleconferencing system of claim 2 wherein, if first participant opts for selecting the incoming teleconference call, the incoming call acceptance mechanism places the active teleconference call on hold and accepts the incoming teleconference call.

8. The teleconferencing system of claim 2 further comprising:

- (a) a call initiator associated with the first participant attempting to initiate the teleconference call with the second participant, the call initiator including a call status indicator for indicating the status of the call to the first participant.

9. The teleconference system of claim 8, wherein the incoming call acceptance mechanism is operable to display the originator of the incoming call.

10. The teleconferencing system of claim 2, further comprising:

- (a) an add participant selection mechanism for selecting a new participant from among a plurality of potential participants and adding the new participant to an active teleconference call.

11. The teleconferencing system of claim 2, further comprising:

(a) an incoming call detecting mechanism for detecting, during a first teleconference call between a first and second of the participants, an attempt by a third caller to initiate a second teleconference call with the second participant, and for notifying the second participant of the attempt; and

(b) an incoming call acceptance mechanism, operable by the second participant, for adding the third caller to the first teleconference call.

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12. The teleconferencing system according to claim 11 wherein the incoming call detecting mechanism can detect and the incoming call acceptance mechanism can add a fourth participant to the teleconference call, the first, second and third participants.

13. The teleconferencing system of claim 2, further comprising:

(a) an AV path for carrying AV signals among the workstations, the AV signals representing video images and/or spoken audio of the participants;

(b) an AV conference manager for managing a videoconference during which the video image and spoken audio of one of the participants is reproduced at the workstation of another of the participants;

wherein the AV conference manager is operable to support a maximum number of calls equal to N, where N is any integer, associated with a workstation; and

(c) a call selector which enables a participant, operating the workstation, when faced with M possible calls where M is an integer greater than N , to select N calls of the M possible calls.

14. The teleconferencing system of claim 13 further comprising:

(a) means operable by the participant to invoke further calls even if the AV conference manager is supporting N active calls and to give the participant the opportunity to select which calls are to be active.

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15. The teleconferencing system of claim 2 further comprising

(a) an incoming call postponing mechanism, operable by the first participant, for notifying a participant initiating the incoming teleconference call that the first participant, instead of accepting the call, wishes to postpone it.

16. The teleconferencing system of claim 15 wherein the first participant can operate the incoming call postponing mechanism to indicate, to the participant initiating the incoming call, an expected period of time by which the incoming call is to be postponed.

17. The teleconferencing system of claim 16 further comprising:

(a) means to capture and save particulars with respect to the postponed incoming teleconference call, sufficient enough for the first participant to later initiate a teleconference call, with the participant who initiated the postponed incoming teleconference call.

18. The teleconferencing system of claim 2, further comprising:

(a) a teleconference call deferring mechanism, operable by a first participant in a teleconference between the first and at least, a second participant, to defer the teleconference and to capture the state of the teleconference call, the state including sufficient particulars to enable at least one of the participants to re-establish the teleconference call.

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19. The teleconferencing system of claim 18 wherein the first participant can operate the call deferring mechanism to indicate, to at least the second participant, an expected period of time by which the teleconference call is to be deferred.

20. The teleconferencing system of claim 18 wherein the call deferring mechanism causes addressing identifiers relating to participants and to documents to be recorded, whereby, when the call is re-established, the monitors of the workstations display a recreation of their respective displays at the time the call was deferred.

21. The teleconferencing system of claim 18 wherein the call deferring mechanism causes the images displayed on the monitor of each participant to be recorded when the teleconference call is deferred, whereby each the participant can access the recorded images after the call is deferred.

22. The teleconferencing system of claim 2 further comprising at least one of the group consisting of:

(a) a remote participant hold selection mechanism operable by a first participant, in a teleconference call among at least the first, a second and a third participant, for placing on hold at least the second participant while maintaining the teleconference call between the first and third participant; and

B1 (b) a remote participant disconnection mechanism operable by a first participant, in a teleconference call among at least the first, a second and a third participant, for disconnecting the second participant while maintaining the teleconference call between the first and third participants,

23. A method for conducting a teleconference among a plurality of participants having workstations with associated monitors for displaying visual images, and with associated AV capture and reproduction capabilities for capturing and reproducing video images and spoken audio of the participants, the workstations being interconnected by a first network, the network providing a data path for carrying digital data signals among the workstations, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) detecting an incoming teleconference call, from at least one participant at the workstation of a first participant;

(b) notifying the first participant of the identity of each participant forming a part of the incoming teleconference call; and

(c) providing the first participant with the option of accepting the incoming teleconference call.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising the step of:

(a) selecting a desired incoming call mode from one of an intercom mode and a telephone mode, wherein

(i) if telephone mode is selected or the first participant is engaged in an active teleconference call, the first participant is notified of and provided with the option of accepting the incoming teleconference call, and

(ii) if intercom mode is selected, the incoming call can be accepted automatically.

25. The method of claim 24 further comprising at least one of the steps selected from the group consisting of:

(a) blocking all incoming teleconference calls;

(b) notifying the first participant that the second participant refuses to accept the call; and

(c) notifying the first participant that an attempt has been made to establish the call but that the call has not yet been established.

26. The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of indicating to a user of a workstation that a priority teleconference call is being directed to the user workstation.

27. The method of claim 23 further comprising the steps of:

- (a) detecting whether a first participant accepted a teleconference call initiated by a second participant; and
- (b) visually displaying at the workstation of the first participant an indication that the second participant attempted to call the first participant, if the first participant did not accept the teleconference call.

28. The method of claim 23 further comprising the steps of:

- (a) placing the active teleconference call on hold; and
- (b) accepting the incoming teleconference call.

29. The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of:
indicating the status of the call to the first participant.

30. The method of claim 29 further comprising the step of displaying the origin of the incoming call.

31. The method of claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

- (a) an add participant selection mechanism for selecting a new participant from among a plurality of potential participants; and

- (b) adding the new participant to an active teleconference call.

32. The method of claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

- (a) detecting, during a first teleconference call between a first and second of the participants, an attempt by a third caller to initiate a second teleconference call with the second participant;
- (b) notifying the second participant of the attempt; and
- (c) adding the third caller to the first teleconference call.

34. The method of claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

- (a) AV signals among the workstations, the AV signals representing video images and spoken audio of the participants;
- (b) managing a videoconference during which the video image and spoken audio of one of the participants is reproduced at the workstation of another of the participants;
- (c) supporting a maximum number of calls equal to N, where N is any integer, associated with a workstation; and
- (d) enabling a participant, operating the workstation, when faced with M possible calls where M is an integer greater than N, to select N calls of the M possible calls.

35. The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of:

- (a) notifying a participant initiating the incoming teleconference call that the first participant wishes to postpone the call instead of accepting it.

36. The method of claim 35 further comprising the step of indicating to the participant initiating the incoming call, an expected period of time by which the incoming call is to be postponed.

37. The method of claim 36 further comprising the steps of:

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- (a) capturing and saving particulars with respect to the postponed incoming teleconference call; and
 - (b) later initiating a teleconference call, with the participant who initiated the postponed incoming teleconference call, using the saved particulars.

38. The method of claim 23, further comprising the steps of:

- (a) deferring the teleconference;
- (b) capturing the state of the teleconference call; and
- (c) enabling at least one of the participants to re-establish the teleconference call using the captured state.

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39. The method of claim 23 further comprising at least one of the steps selected from the group consisting of:

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- (a) in a teleconference call among at least the first, a second and a third participant, for placing on hold at least the second participant while maintaining the teleconference call between the first and third participants; and
 - (b) in a teleconference call among at least the first, a second and a third participant, for disconnecting the second participant while maintaining the teleconference call between the first and third participants.

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REMARKS

This application is a 35 U.S.C § 121 divisional application of parent United States patent application 08/131,523, filed October 1, 1993. Claims 2 to 21 in this application are amended versions of the claims in Group VII defined in a Restriction/Election requirement in the parent application.